

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 5:53 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 6:22 p.m., when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. LEVIN).

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when we come back in January—we are coming back on the 22nd—we are going to immediately move to the Indian Health Care Reauthorization Act. I have spoken to the chairman of the committee, Senator DORGAN. We are going to do everything we can to finish that legislation on January 22. If we can't finish it January 22 or early on January 23, we are going to move immediately to FISA. I have had a meeting today, for example, with General Hayden and Admiral McConnell, to talk about FISA. I have told them it is going to be very difficult to get this done. It expires on February 1. It is something we need to do. It would be in the interests of everyone to have that legislation extended for a year. I offered to do that earlier yesterday, and the White House said, no, that wasn't a good idea.

We are going to do everything we can to complete that legislation quickly when we get back, after we do the Indian Health Care Reauthorization Act.

Also, one of the things we are going to do is, there is one Senator who has held up scores of pieces of legislation that have already passed the House. These bills have all been reported out of the committee by Senators BINGAMAN and DOMENICI. They are very important pieces of legislation dealing with the jurisdiction of that committee. What we are going to do, and what we have done, is all those bills that have passed the House of Representatives, we put them into one vehicle over here so we will have one vote.

I have offered to Senator COBURN, who is holding these up—I said, I am willing to let you have two or three votes on these. We have been more than reasonable waiting to work through this, in my opinion. I think it is unreasonable that he has held these up. We are going to complete this legislation one way or the other as soon as we complete these other items I mentioned.

I will have more to say about this in a little while, but I spoke to the Repub-

lican leader today, and we both have a good feeling about how we have ended the session. Both of us didn't get exactly what we wanted, but there was a feeling of cooperation and bipartisan-ship. I hope that spills over into next year—I certainly hope so, and I know Senator MCCONNELL feels that way.

I would like to spend a minute on nominations.

My staff, Ron Weich, who does such a wonderful job for me, indicates I said FISA should be extended for 1 year. It should be extended for 30 days, so we have an opportunity to legislate that during that period of time. I appreciate my staff correcting that statement I made.

We have been working with the White House for the last several days in an effort to reach an agreement that works for both sides regarding nominations. We were unable to reach such an agreement before the Thanksgiving holiday. That led to my calling the Senate into pro forma sessions to avoid the President's very objectionable recess appointments. My hope was I could avoid that prospect for the coming holiday. I tried very hard to work with the President. But he indicated he would still use the period of time that we would be in recess to appoint objectionable nominees.

I said go ahead—here are some. We will give you these—for example, the head of the Federal Aviation Agency, somebody on the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve Board, the Chemical Safety Board. Go ahead and do those recess appointments.

He wanted a person who cannot get through the Judiciary Committee to be Assistant Counsel to the Attorney General, a man by the name of Bradbury. I talked to various members of the Judiciary Committee yesterday. They don't think the man is somebody who should be confirmed by the Senate. I would say, without a lot of hesitation, there is no chance he would be confirmed. It is my understanding he has already been recess appointed. I can't understand why the President wouldn't do what we have suggested.

My only solution is to prevent this and call a pro forma session again. I thought these jobs—there are more than 50 of them, career-ending opportunities for a lot of these people. These are very important jobs. All of them have to be confirmed by the Senate. I could be a Grinch. I could tell the President I will not move any nominations given his demand to make controversial recess appointments. That would mean more than 50 Republican nominees would not move forward today. So during the holidays it would be: Well, maybe when we come back in a month we can do something.

The Republicans would get about 60 nominations. We would get eight.

But I am not going to do that. I am not going to be the Grinch. We are going to go into pro forma sessions so the President cannot appoint people we think are objectionable, but I am not

going to meet stubbornness with stubbornness. It is not good for the body politic; just because someone is being unreasonable means we have to be unreasonable.

Think about this. Because the President wants one person whom we cannot get out of the Judiciary Committee, he is willing to hold everything up. It doesn't sound like much of a compromise to me. I can't understand the rationale behind this.

I have spoken with Josh Bolton. Josh Bolton is a very pleasant person to deal with. He has a boss, and that is the President of the United States. So I called Josh Bolton and told him, as unreasonable as I think our President is being, I am not going to be unreasonable. We are going to confirm these appointments this evening; as I said, about 60 for the Republicans, 8 for the Democrats. And I will keep the Senate in pro forma session to block the President from doing an end run around the Senate and the Constitution with his controversial nominations.

I hope this is a Christmas present for these people. These are important jobs, and I wish them well in their jobs. I wish them all a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year with their new positions.

PROVIDING FOR A CONDITIONAL ADJOURNMENT OR RECESS OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. REID. I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate a message from the House of Representatives on S. Con. Res. 61.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. SALAZAR) laid before the Senate the message from the House of Representatives:

S. CON. RES. 61

Resolved, That the resolution from the Senate (S. Con. Res. 61) entitled "Concurrent resolution providing for a conditional adjournment or recess of the Senate, and a conditional adjournment of the House of Representatives", do pass with amendments:

(1) Page 1, line 2, of the Senate engrossed amendment, strike "adjourns" and insert: *recesses or adjourns*

(2) Page 1, beginning on line 6, of the Senate engrossed amendment, strike "or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 3 of this concurrent resolution" and insert: *or until such day and time as may be specified in the motion to recess or adjourn, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 3 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first*

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate concur in the House amendment to the concurrent resolution and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed

to the immediate consideration of H.J. Res. 72.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 72) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2008, and for other purposes.

Without objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the joint resolution be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (H.J. Res. 72) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION NOMINEES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Republicans have taken the very unusual step of objecting to a majority vote on their own nominee, Mr. Hans von Spakovsky. I offered them that option. The option was rejected. Mr. von Spakovsky is a very controversial nominee, but I said: Let's have a vote on him. Now, remember, we are not asking for 60 votes. We say: Have a simple majority vote. By that action, not accepting that offer, the Republicans are blocking the Senate from ensuring that the Federal Election Commission can function at perhaps the most important time—during a Presidential election year. What they have done will ensure that the FEC is unable to enforce the new ethics bill we enacted. The agency is in the midst of rulemakings on that law.

There are two conclusions I draw from the objections of the Republicans: First, even Republicans find Mr. von Spakovsky so objectionable that he would be defeated on a majority vote; and second, facing possible defeat for their own nominee, the Republicans would prefer to hold the remaining three unobjectionable nominees hostage and render the FEC unable to function in the next election.

We have offered them a majority vote. We said: We will take a position, a majority vote on all three. They said: No, now we want 60. So the FEC will be unable to function during the next election.

Both the New York Times and Washington Post recently editorialized about the absolutely critical importance of ensuring we have a functional FEC during a Presidential election that promises to bring record sums of money into our political system. Democrats agree. We are prepared to have a majority vote on each of the nominations. But this nominee has been controversial since the President recess-appointed him almost 2 years ago. That controversy stems from his

well-documented work as a Justice Department lawyer in the Voting Rights Section.

The Republicans say he is a person whose work on matters that suppress minority voting, such as voter ID and the Texas redistricting, has nothing to do with his responsibility at the FEC, which we feel bordered on illegality, if not being unethical. Work on matters to suppress minority voting has everything to do with the Federal Election Commission. So I take issue with their statements that it means nothing.

The problem my colleagues and I have with him is that his prior work demonstrates that he is at least a partisan manipulator of our Federal election laws. That, it seems to me, is highly relevant to the advice-and-consent duty the Constitution puts in our care as Senators, but that is a decision each Senator in this body should be permitted to make. We are not going to be able to do that. Republican action today prevents us from making it.

Remember, a simple majority vote on their nominee, but they want 60 votes on ours.

It is important to note how we got here and the concessions that have been made on our side.

His history, not surprisingly, led to a number of Senators on our side of the aisle, Democrats—we imposed a 60-vote threshold on the nomination. We originally wanted 60 votes on this nomination. On the other side of the aisle, Republicans demanded that the Senate only consider the nomination of the remaining three noncontroversial nominees if he was confirmed by the Senate. These two positions could not be further apart. In view of that impasse, I have long suggested that the White House withdraw his name and substitute a new name of the President's choosing. Despite this, the nomination has endured.

As the days ran short in this session, my Democratic colleagues indicated to me that they would reconsider and allow a majority vote on each of the nominees. That resulted in my ability to make this offer to Republicans of a majority vote, and I thank my colleagues for their work with me in this regard. I appreciate very much that we could have a 50-vote margin on this controversial nomination and on the rest. That work should have meant that the FEC would continue to function. The Federal Election Commission will not be able to function. It should have meant that campaign finance laws would be enforced in the next election. It should have meant that the FEC would be able to complete its new binding rules as it relates to bundling, but it will not because Republicans have obstructed a vote on these nominees, including a vote on their own.

The Republicans seek confirmation even though a majority of Senators may not support that nomination. That, it seems to me, is truly extraordinary.

A lot has been said about the precedents of FEC appointments. A Repub-

lican Senator came out here yesterday and said there is precedent for this. Arguments made yesterday are that essentially FEC nominations always move as a package, always move together. But that is, of course, simply not true. It is true that FEC nominees have usually moved as pairs by unanimous consent, and that pairing of nominees is generally a rule on all boards and commissions: Here is a Republican, here is a Democrat; let's get it done. We do not need a lot of time on the floor. That is a fact, not by reason of precedent as much as by reason of necessity. Nomination pairing occurs because it gives both sides a reason to come to the table and confirm nominees.

There are also cases of FEC nominees not moving together by unanimous consent. One recent case is that of former FEC Commissioner Brad Smith. Mr. Smith was very controversial on our side of the aisle and required a roll-call vote, which he got. He succeeded in winning confirmation.

There are also cases I have known where a Republican President did not respect the Democratic selection of an FEC nominee. For example, President Reagan refused to send the Democratic selection of Tom Harris because the Republicans objected to his nomination.

These different examples do show there is no single precedent about how nominations are handled. As is so often the case of nominations, a lot depends, as it should, on the actual identity of the nominee in question. I do think, however, that as a rule the offer of a majority vote on a nominee is presumptively fair. If the nominee is so controversial that he cannot win the support of a majority of Senators, the Constitution and the rules of this body dictate the appropriate outcome for that nominee.

It is my hope that my colleagues on the other side will reconsider this position. I would hope this White House would reconsider their support for this controversial nomination. If they do not, the responsibility for a defunct FEC rests squarely on their shoulders.

DEMOCRATIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we have reached the end of a long, hectic, at times contentious and frustrating but unquestionably productive first year of the 110th Congress.

We welcomed back our friend and colleague, Senator TIM JOHNSON, who has made an extraordinary recovery, and we were so happy this week to see him walk in the Senate Chamber.

We lost a friend in Craig Thomas, said hello to his successor, Dr. JOHN BARRASSO, and said goodbye to Senator TRENT LOTT last night.

We held an unusual three Congressional Gold Medal ceremonies, three of them this year. That is very unusual.

We honored the Tuskegee Airmen for showing America that valor is color-blind.